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News Release ~ Communiqué

Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy unveiled

VICTORIA, JULY 12, 1995 - The Pacific Marine Legacy, a five-year program creating an expanded and integrated network of coastal and marine parks on Canada's Pacific coast, was launched today by the federal and provincial governments.

The legacy will also lead to the creation of a new national park as well as new provincial parks and ecological reserves in the Strait of Georgia.

The announcement was made today at a signing ceremony involving Canadian Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy and B.C. Environment, Lands and Parks Minister Elizabeth Cull.

"The federal government is acting on its commitment to complete the national parks system," said Mr. Dupuy. "Under this Legacy, we will cooperate to acquire lands for a new national park in the Gulf Islands. New protected areas, including national marine conservation areas, will not only help Canada meet its obligations under the international Biodiversity Convention, but will also lead to new destinations for recreational activities, sustainable tourism benefits and job creation."

"Today's announcement is another step toward realizing our commitment to double parks and protected wilderness areas in B.C.," said Cull. "Building on initiatives such as the Lower Mainland and Commonwealth nature legacies, this program will firmly establish a means of preserving and managing our natural marine heritage in the years to come."

A key component of the Legacy is a commitment by each government to invest approximately $6 million annually over the next five years to acquire land in the Gulf Islands of the Strait of Georgia on a "willing-buyer/willing-seller" basis for new protected areas.

"The public has clearly expressed its desire to help protect the most valuable areas left on our west coast, and has demonstrated a willingness to contribute to that goal," said Cull. "Funding for this program is a starting point for a long-term, joint effort. As part of this program, a special fund is being established specifically so the public can contribute to future acquisitions."

"Given the constant urban expansion of nearby Vancouver and Victoria, the Strait of Georgia's natural environment is one of the highest at-risk areas in Canada," saidMr. Dupuy. "As a direct response to concerns raised about the future of our west coast marine heritage, both levels of government are expressing a firm commitment to protecting this area."

Today's announcement also confirmed that Galiano Island's Bodega Ridge has been purchased as the first part of the Legacy's Gulf Island acquisition program. The 150-hectare Bodega Ridge has been acquired for $1.3 million, including a $350,000 contribution from the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

"The Nature Conservancy of Canada - in helping to acquire Bodega Ridge - is a prime example of how this program will encourage communities and private organizations to work together with us in raising the funds needed to meet our shared objectives," said Cull.

As part of the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy, the feasibility of establishing two new national marine conservation areas on the Pacific Coast will be studied. Consultation will be an integral part of the process of implementing the Legacy, and a Public Advisory Committee will be created to foster partnerships and ensure the integration of a family of Pacific Coast heritage areas.

The Committee will include representation from First Nations, local and regional governments, and

environmental, recreational, tourism and resource industry interests. Acquisitions made under the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy will not conflict with on-going treaty negotiations.

Those wishing to make financial contributions to the Legacy should make cheques or money orders payable to: "Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy." Contributions can be sent to:

BC Parks, 2nd floor, 800 Johnson Street, Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4,Phone: (604) 356-0535

(A backgrounder is available on request for more information)

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PACIFIC MARINE HERITAGE LEGACY IN BRIEF

The Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy is a five-year federal/provincial program for an expanded and integrated network of coastal and marine protected areas along Canada's Pacific coast, including a new national park in the Strait of Georgia.

Expanded and Integrated Network of Heritage Resources

-The goal: a family of existing and new heritage areas on the coast managed cooperatively by different agencies.
-Joint federal-provincial acquisition of key natural areas in the Gulf Islands of the Strait of Georgia.
-Bodega Ridge has been acquired with substantial public donations.
-Establishment of a new national park in the Gulf Islands.
-New provincial parks and ecological reserves.
-Study of new national marine conservation areas on the West Coast.
-Linkages between cultural, natural and recreational themes and attractions.
-Cooperation between federal and provincial governments in sharing management resources, technical capabilities and scientific research.
-Complementary interpretation and education programs at existing and new heritage areas.
-Builds on previous federal/provincial collaboration to establish Pacific Rim and Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserves.

Partnerships

-Other levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors will be invited to be active participants in the implementation of the Legacy.
-A special provincial fund for private contributions to complement government investments has been

established. Other cost-sharing partnerships will also be entered into.
-Invitations to incorporate historical and cultural elements of the west coast heritage, including that of First Nations.

Natural Values of the Strait of Georgia Region

-This region is perhaps the most at-risk natural environment in Canada, given the expanding urban pressures of such nearby centres as Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle. At the heart of this highly developed region lies the southern Gulf Islands.

-The mix of vegetation in this area is unique in Canada, including arbutus, Garry oak and the more obscure prickly pear cactus. More familiar species include western red cedar, Pacific dogwood and the broadleaf maple.
-Animal species include Bendires shrew, the California bat, Townsend's chipmunk, Douglas squirrel, the western spotted skunk, and the black-tailed deer.
-The Strait of Georgia supports significant populations of marine and shore birds, and is also home to diverse communities of fish and invertebrate species. The several species of marine mammal in the Strait include its renowned pods of killer whales.

Economic Benefits/Tourism

-The Legacy provides unique opportunities to strengthen the tourism industry.
-Implementation will result in new network of tourism attractions that will generate long term economic benefits.
-Improved integration of heritage destinations, coupled with a focus on the tourism industry, links with the recently created Canadian Tourism Commission and the federal Tourism Job Creation and Training Initiative.

International Dimension

-The combination of natural, cultural and recreational resources makes the Pacific coast internationally significant.
-The Legacy demonstrates Canada's commitment to fulfil international obligations in support of the Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity.
-Since lands and waters of Alaska and Washington form an integral part of the west coast experience, Canada and B.C. will seek close cooperation with both state governments and the U.S. federal government.

Implementation

-Annual investment by the federal and provincial governments of approximately $6 million each over the next 5 years.
-There will be a joint federal-provincial Management Committee.
-Recognition of the interests of First Nations, and will not conflict with ongoing treaty negotiations.
-Consultations with First Nations and others will be an integral part of the process of implementing the Legacy.
-A Public Advisory Committee will be created with balanced representation from First Nations, local and regional governments, and environmental, recreational, tourism, and resource industry interests.
-The provincial government will manage all jointly acquired lands on an interim basis until it is determined which will become a national park.

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BACKGROUNDER

Bodega Ridge on Galiano Island

Located in the Strait of Georgia's Gulf Islands, on the southwest coast of British Columbia, Galiano Island's Bodega Ridge is a 150 hectare parcel of land now permanently protected as part of the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy.

Bodega Ridge has long been considered and promoted for preservation by local residents for its spectacular setting and unique ecological features. The site stretches four kilometres in a north/south direction and is located towards the northwest end of Galiano Island near Retreat Cove. At 328 metres above sea level, Bodega Ridge is the highest point on the island and boasts breathtaking views of the Trincomali Channel, Gulf Islands, Vancouver Island and Georgia Strait. Galiano is classified as part of the Coastal Douglas Fir zone and is the driest of all the Gulf Islands - receiving less than 60 cm of rainfall per year.

The cliffs of Bodega Ridge provide habitat for a variety of birdlife, the most notable of which are bald eagles, peregrine falcons and turkey vultures. An already well developed trail system winds through both grasslands and forests adjacent to more than 3 kms of waterfront, providing visitors with an array of scenic viewpoints and exposure to the area's unique ecosystem. The abundant plant life found here is considered rare for this region.

Due to Galiano Island's proximity to the growing populations of Greater Vancouver and the Tsawwassen ferry terminal, the need to acquire and preserve the privately owned Bodega Ride area became more prominent - particularly because one of the three parcels of land had already been subdivided for development.

The original estimated market value of the Bodega Ridge properties was $1,405,000. Through a partnership between government, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Galiano Conservancy Association, local individuals and the property owners themselves, a purchase price of $1,300,000 was established for the preservation of the area.

A total of $950,000 was contributed jointly by federal and provincial governments as part of the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy, with the remainder coming from private contributions through the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The cost-sharing arrangement encouraged the participation of a broad coalition of interests, and allowed all parties to share a sense of ownership and accomplishment.